

WASHINGTON, D.C. - The Commerce, Justice and Science Appropriations bill that Rep. Sam Farr (D-Carmel) and colleagues approved in committee today sets aside millions of dollars in funds for ocean research, including hefty chunks for the Central Coast.

"I am proud of the headway we have been able to make on ocean issues this year," said Rep. Farr. "These funds are proof that our nation is finally realizing the integral position that our oceans play in our lives, and I'm proud to be a part of this growing awareness."

Program details:

- \$73,000,000 was designated for national marine sanctuaries, the marine equivalent of the country's national parks and refuges. These 14 marine sanctuaries protect an area equivalent to the entire national park system, and about half of the total area is in California. Among other projects, the funds will support Santa Cruz's plan for a new sanctuary visitor center.
- \$2.128 million will go to the National Marine Protected Areas Center, which includes funding for the center's Science Institute in Santa Cruz. The organization's mission is to facilitate the effective use of science, technology, training and information in the planning, management and evaluation of the nation's system of marine protected areas.
- \$2.5 million will go to the California Bay Watershed Education and Training program, known as B-WET. The program offers hands-on, multi-disciplinary environmental experiences aligned with academic learning standards. Funds will go to programs in Monterey Bay, San Francisco Bay and the Santa Barbara Channel.
- \$600,000 was designated for highly migratory shark fisheries research. Federal legislation was passed in 2001 to establish a National Shark Research Consortium. Funding for the consortium was requested to accelerate research programs at four institutions known for their shark and ray research, including the Moss Landing Marine Laboratories. Funding will allow the fisheries to continue their research, in turn helping state and federal fisheries agencies better understand and manage these valuable and vulnerable species.

The Commerce, Justice and Science Appropriations bill will be voted on by the full House later this month.

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